

Anti-Inflation Act

[Translation]

Mr. Arthur Portelance (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the information required to provide an answer to this question is not readily available. As the Commission does not keep records pertaining to the employment contracts of individuals, the technical difficulties and administrative cost involved preclude the gathering of such material.

● (1520)

[English]

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might be permitted to draw the attention of the parliamentary secretary to question No. 3,588 which I placed on the order paper on November 20. This question was put on the order paper to elicit information in respect of the practices of employees of foreign governments in Ottawa and whether they have been living within Canadian laws. As it has now been over four months, I wonder whether the parliamentary secretary would endeavour to speed up the answer to this question.

Mr. Blais: As always.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ANTI-INFLATION ACT

MEASURE TO ADD NEW DEFINITIONS

The House resumed, from Thursday, March 18, consideration of the motion of Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale) that Bill C-89, to amend the Anti-Inflation Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to conclude the speech on Bill C-89 which I started last Thursday, March 18. There are contractors who might suddenly have a flurry of business. The question being asked is, at what point do they stop working? Last fall, Mr. Speaker, I said that controls can have a distorting effect on the economy and that the time period is crucial. I still believe that. When he last spoke on the anti-inflation bill, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) questioned the constitutionality of this legislation. At that time the right hon. member stated, and I quote from page 9587 of *Hansard* for December 1, 1975:

—I suggest the question is whether this legislation is constitutional. It could easily be made constitutional by a simple provision in the preamble that an emergency exists, but the government did not dare admit that because it had contended for several years that there was no emergency.

I would suggest that if the government had taken the right hon. member's remarks into consideration and had consulted the various constitutional experts prior to putting this legislation through parliament, they would not be in the sorry state of having it challenged before the Supreme Court. It has now become clear that the government were not the slightest bit concerned over the consti-

[Mr. Stanbury.]

tutionality of their anti-inflation legislation. The very fact that this matter has been referred to the Supreme Court only adds more confusion to the over-all anti-inflation legislation.

The Progressive Conservative party has proven, by its consistent performance and leadership, that it does believe some program of restraint is in the best interests of Canadians. We have no intention of making a political football of the anti-inflation program; our intention is to point out the shortcomings of the program so the government will rectify the situation and continue battling inflation. Double-digit inflation must be stopped. While the Progressive Conservative party has offered a positive program and one that would work, we want to make it clear that the time has come for the government to quit stalling and to show some initiative.

On February 16, the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) called upon the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) to amend the legislation by changing the appeal system, and even last fall there were appeals from this side of the House to clean up the flaws. Most of these changes should have been made in the original bill. Of course, this government only recognizes mistakes when it is too late. The Anti-Inflation Board, according to reports, has a serious backlog of cases to be cleared up. But what does this government do? Rather than devising a system, it quickly adds 41,000 new companies to the list of those subject to the guidelines. I question what is to be accomplished by such a move.

In light of the government's continuing lack of consultation and its persistent reluctance to make the guidelines applicable to all segments of society, I seriously wonder how they expect organized labour to co-operate. For example, in the area of municipalities there is no jurisdictional control from the Anti-Inflation Board, so we have cases such as rising water rates in Manitoba and soaring power rates in Nova Scotia. How can we really ask the people to tighten their belts if prices are not completely controlled in all segments of the economy? The Anti-Inflation Board, as it presently exists, is a complete and utter farce. I challenge the government to clean up its act.

I should like to conclude my remarks by pointing out that in a public relations document acquired by the Canadian Press from the Anti-Inflation Board it was stated that the Anti-Inflation Board had doubt about the Prime Minister's commitment. The document went on to demonstrate a fairly uneasy relationship between the Anti-Inflation Board and the government. If this sort of attitude continues, then inflation will in future go uncontrolled and, I for one, am confident that the Canadian people will not tolerate this nonsense.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I should like today to speak in support of Bill C-89. In recent months, in speeches on various public platforms in North Bay and in Winnipeg, for example, I have pointed out the urgent need for improvements in the appeal procedure set out in Bill C-73, the legislation which created the prices and incomes control program. I argued that this was necessary if the program was to have the wide public support and understanding required to enable it to work effectively. This bill does propose such improvements. I also pointed out that for these purposes the program must be